

Re-positioning: Internationally Educated Teachers in Manitoba School Communities

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Abstract

Internationally educated teachers (IETs) can change how cultural differences are perceived in school communities. Rather than mirroring dominant social norms, IETs can be an alternative to stereotypes and extend all students' understanding of difference. This qualitative study examined how teacher agency is expressed by IETs in the context of a bridging program and in schools where IETs are employed as teachers in Manitoba. Their role in the school system is approached through considering agency as an effect. The analysis suggests that IETs act as cultural mediators and have the potential to become agents of change, if they find teaching positions within which they choose to position themselves as critical cultural mediators.

Keywords: internationally educated teachers, position, teacher agency, cultural differences, immigrant

Résumé

Les enseignants formés à l'étranger peuvent changer la façon dont les différences culturelles sont perçues dans les communautés scolaires. Plutôt que de reproduire les normes sociales dominantes, ces enseignants peuvent être une alternative aux stéréotypes et permettent d'étendre la compréhension de tous les élèves de la différence. Cette étude qualitative a examiné la façon dont l'agentivité des enseignants est exprimée par ces enseignants dans le cadre d'un programme de transition et dans les écoles du Manitoba où ils travaillent comme professeurs. Leur rôle dans le système scolaire est abordé en considérant l'agentivité comme un effet. L'analyse suggère que les enseignants formés à l'étranger agissent comme des médiateurs culturels et ont le potentiel de devenir des agents du changement, s'ils trouvent des postes d'enseignement dans lesquels ils choisissent de se positionner en tant que médiateurs culturels critiques.

Mots-clés: enseignants formés à l'étranger, agentivité des enseignants, différences culturelles, immigrants

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I have been able to adjust well and create an individual who is not one kind of person. I find it difficult if I have to call myself [a person of my home country], because I am not that anymore. All that I have been through, all the different cultures—for me it was interesting and I was hoping to adapt and embrace it and grow with different cultures I had experienced. And Canada was just one of them. Here I realized I was valued here as an individual; my uniqueness was encouraged to show, to shine. I was very happy to, what should I say, be myself...

(Ella, Internationally Educated Teacher)

Discovering an identity that is not “one kind of person” is a 21st century task. Immigrant students and particularly immigrant teachers have out of necessity been involved in this task. Canadian schools and communities may learn from their experiences. Curriculum, in its broadest sense, is changing as our school communities respond to and include students who are immigrants, refugees, and first generation Canadians. This paper examines how internationally educated teachers (IETs) participate in these changes and in some cases, propel them. IETs are positioned to become agents of change in school communities. To what extent that position is taken up is contextual. The study explored how teacher agency was expressed by internationally educated teachers in the context of a university-based bridging program and in school contexts where IETs were employed as teachers in the province of Manitoba.

A bridging program provides coursework and support to gain provincial qualifications towards teacher certification. As immigrant professionals, IETs in a bridging program are positioned in a cross-cultural exchange with each other, with their instructors, and with their mentor teachers and their students. In the context of this exchange, IETs’ learn to negotiate and mediate cultural differences. When IETs found employment as teachers, they were re-positioned, in the context of a particular school community. How is this re-positioning of IETs’ experience as individuals and as teachers woven into their interactions with immigrant- and Canadian-born youth? Does this hybridity make them more or less authoritative in the schools? The research (Cho 2010; Quiocho & Rios, 2000) had suggested that they could be effective agents of change. The purpose of this study was to investigate to whether this was evident among IETs in Manitoba school communities, and to what extent.

Agency can be understood as the potential to resist and to recreate socio-cultural structures (Hall, 2000). This paper approaches educational change and teacher agency with the assumption that the educational system is implicated in social inequities and that teachers, individually and in groups, may choose to address those inequities (Luke, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Vongalis-Macrow, 2007). If teacher agency is understood as an effect of presence and participation in a specific education context (Priestley, Robinson, & Biesta, 2011), then IETs’ presence and participation may affect equity issues in their schools because of IETs’ experiences of cultural differences, displacement, and resilience.

Agency, in other words, is not something that people can *have*; it is something that people *do*. It denotes a ‘quality’ of the *engagement* of actors with temporal-

relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves. Viewing agency in such terms helps us to understand how humans are able to be reflexive and creative, acting counter to societal constraints, but also how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments. (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2012)

The environments of bridging programs for immigrant professionals are constructed to support their transition to employment. However, a program may also include other goals. The Academic and Professional Bridging Program for IETs at the University of Manitoba was originally funded as an equity initiative. In addition to according equity to the immigrant teachers it served directly, the program's goal was to build equity in the education system, as conveyed in a program document for an information session in June, 2008:

In addition to their teaching qualifications and experiences IETs' cultural experiences can enrich the Manitoba education system. The IET Pilot Program complements equity related employment initiatives at university and provincial levels. The Faculty of Education is committed to a teaching profession that reflects the growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students in Manitoba Schools.

The certification of IETs was the program's first step. A mentorship program and outreach to education stakeholders were implemented to support and advocate for IET employment. IET employment in Manitoba schools would provide culturally relevant teaching and important role models.

IETs do not simply reflect cultural diversity or represent equity; they participate in developing equity. If teacher agency can be a factor for change, then the particular experiences of internationally educated teachers can provide for particular kinds of educational change. According to Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2012), teacher agency can be understood as having three dimensions: the past or iterative, the present or practical-evaluative, and the future or projective. The process of change emerges through engaging with all three dimensions. The process occurs for the individual within a temporal and spatial environment including socio-cultural structures.

Narrative theory (Connolly & Clandinin, 1988) understands teaching as experience and that experience is located temporally. A teaching experience or situation is linked to the past and to the future, with narrative of that experience providing connections. That narrative is described as the teacher's personal practical knowledge landscape. That personal practical knowledge's effect is extended by situating individual narratives in social contexts. For IETs, awareness of the social context is required in order to navigate cultural differences. Their personal practical knowledge includes at least two cultural landscapes, often more. As IETs take up the position as professional teachers in Manitoba, they are structured by their cultural experiences in the country of origin, by the experience of immigration, and by the host culture. Their teacher agency includes these multiple landscapes.

Methods

This study is part of a broader study of immigrant education and integration. Research took place in two stages. The first stage focused on the experiences of IETs in the Academic and Professional Bridging Program at the University of Manitoba. In the second stage, research took place in schools where IETs were employed and focused on interactions in the school community. Further study of IETs and school communities is planned.

IETs in bridging program. Data for qualitative analysis were collected from a focus group of IETs, interviews with individual IETs, and interviews with bridging program staff. Participants for the study were drawn from IETs admitted to the Academic and Professional Bridging Program at the University of Manitoba from 2008-2010, which included two cohorts: Cohort II started in September, 2007, with 11 IETs and Cohort III started in January, 2009, with seven IETs. A research assistant—an IET who had not been enrolled in the bridging program—recruited participants and organized and participated in the focus group. Interviews and focus groups were conducted by the principal investigator, who had been the IET program coordinator from 2008-2010. All interviews and focus groups took place after the IETs had completed the bridging program and after the coordinator had completed her term. Oral data were recorded and transcribed and transcripts were made available to participants to review. Reviewed transcripts were interpreted and analyzed for categories and themes. In this paper, quotations from focus group and interview transcripts are followed by the pseudonym of the participant in brackets.

IETs working in schools. Observations and interviews of five IETs working full-time in four different schools were conducted over a two-month period. Not all IETs from Cohorts II and III were employed full time as classroom teachers. Of those employed, only some were available to be observed. All five participants in the study were IETs who had been enrolled in the bridging program and all five were employed as teachers full-time for much or all of the 2010-2011 school year. Four of the five were in a Winnipeg school division: Mona Blanco (Kindergarten), Neena Kaur (Grade 7), Randy Sugay and Takdeer Singh (both teaching math and science Grades 9 and 10). One IET was teaching in the North: Carmela Esperenza (middle years math and science) had taught on a First Nations school since January 2010.¹

Some of the IETs' students were interviewed informally in four of the five schools (not the Kindergarten). Questions were focused on what students were learning about culture. At the First Nations school, the IET's colleagues were also interviewed. The interviews, observations, and field-notes were transcribed after the visits. Transcriptions were sent to all participants for review, with the exception of the students. Observations and interviews were analyzed for patterns and themes. In this paper, quotations from interview transcripts are followed by the pseudonym of the participant in brackets except for quotations from the students, which are followed by the date of interview.

The principal investigator was a participant observer in the classrooms of the five IETs. Through observation and conversation with the IETs, the students, and other adults, multiple perspectives were considered. Students were asked directly how they learn about culture and IETs were asked directly how they taught about culture. Observations were

¹ All names are pseudonyms.

focused on cultural interactions and cross-cultural learning, to construct Geertz's "thick description" of these classroom interactions. Observations, field-notes, interpretation, and analysis during the study are embedded in my prior experiences of working with IETs and as a classroom teacher and teacher educator. Together, this produced a rich and layered process of gathering data. The interpretation and analysis reflect my position on the importance to education of "metissage" (Donald, 2009), working between and within cultures.

IETs as Immigrant Professionals

Both as participants in a bridging program and as newly hired teachers in Manitoba schools, IETs are positioned differently than native-born pre-service and beginning teachers. As participants in a bridging program, IETs are positioned simultaneously as teachers and as students (Britzman, 1991) to a greater degree than education students in the general education program. Bridging programs are designed for individuals with international teaching credentials from an accredited university who require additional coursework in education to be certified to teach in Canada. Most IETs have teaching experience as well as a teaching degree from their country of origin. Some have taught in more than one country. In Manitoba, the full-time IET bridging program was developed and delivered from the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba and included practica. There were admission requirements, including an academic writing sample and GPA, language, and residence requirements. Aside from meeting these admission requirements, IETs had to access funding. Although tuition was covered by Manitoba Labour and Immigration in the early years of the program, IETs still had to support themselves and, in most cases, their families.

Contradictory Positions

IETs are positioned as professionals and as newcomers; thus, as both capable and vulnerable (Thiessen, Bascia, & Goodson, 1996). For example, in ongoing meetings with mentor teachers for IETs in the practicum, the mentor teachers made clear that they experienced their student-teachers as having expertise in teaching and in subject knowledge and yet also perceived the IETs as lacking cultural knowledge. Like other immigrants, IETs are positioned through socially constructed categories. These categories place them as "outsiders", foreigners, strangers, or Other (Dhamoon, 2009; Hall, 1996; Tastasoglou, 2006). Placing an IET in a position of power, as the teacher, is a counter-narrative from the categorization of "outsider." From a traditional community perspective, the classroom teacher is the insider who delivers prescribed curricula and community values to the children and adolescents (Aikenhead, 2000; Britzman, 1991). That influential insider role can be difficult to obtain as an IET, particularly when that IET is not from an Anglo-European background. Some school communities may have difficulty accepting the IET as a legitimate teacher.

However, IETs had occupied the position of teacher in their countries of origin. The interviews and the goals articulated in their coursework indicate they are highly motivated to resume that role in the host country and see it as a right and a responsibility: "I would say to them [IETs] don't give up, do not lower your expectations, aim high and keep your standards high. You are a teacher and you will remain a teacher in this country. Let that be your goal" (Ella, interview). That experience of privilege in their home countries would vary depending on the country of origin. Their motivation to retain their

teaching identity and the privilege associated with it in the host country is instrumental in navigating through the complex process of gaining official credentials and credibility in the school community. Most IETs in the program were effective in negotiating for themselves and sometimes for others.

IETs experience multiple barriers to employment. The provincial government prioritizes immigration to address labour shortages (Carter, Pandey, & Townsend, 2010) and the availability of retraining for immigrant professionals may be linked to labour shortages. There is no teacher shortage in Winnipeg or southern Manitoba (Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner, 2011). Another barrier to finding a teaching position is discrimination. As a service-based profession, a teacher's cultural skills and language skills, cultural capital, are highly important for the workplace. Employers often mistake an accent as a lack of literacy and oracy. A different accent also becomes the identifier for a range of differences, including race and religion. Cultural differences such as names, dress, food preferences, or forms of making small talk can be sources of discrimination (anecdotal conversations with teachers, administrators, and IETs).

The level of bias and discrimination experienced in the hiring process and in the workplace is high (Benyon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2004, cited in Cho, 2010; Quijcho & Rios, 2000). Many IETs do not conform to standardized version of "teacher" (James, 1994). Dominant culture represents "teacher" as White, Christian, female, young, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied (Bascia, 1996; Cho, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2005). Canadian faculties of education generally have many teacher candidates fitting that description. When asked what to advise other IETs about working in Manitoba, one IET spoke about the difficulties of finding work: "So it is the graduates here they would rather take than immigrants" (Marianna). One IET was so frustrated with the hiring process, he stated he might officially change his name in order to not be identified as an immigrant and thus be able to gain an interview (personal communication, June 2009). Presentations by IETs, interviews, and informal communications with IETs demonstrate their awareness of bias, discrimination, and racism in the educational community and the broader community. This awareness did not manifest as limiting their competency and professionalism.

In the literature, IETs are often portrayed as a "marginalized" group (Cho, 2010; Fuerverger, 1997; Schmidt, 2010; Walsh, Brigham, & Yang, 2010). However, experiences of discrimination do not necessarily lead to IETs self-identifying as marginalized. Identifying discrimination is not equivalent to accepting the terms of those who discriminate. As participants in the program and in the interviews, IETs tended to identify as teachers, not as students and not as marginalized others. Once employed as teachers, the IETs were "home," positioned in their professional role and located in a school community where teacher agency can be experienced.

Constructing "Home"

To a certain extent, the bridging program was also a location close to being a "home" for the transitioning IETs. IETs in the program were in a cohort structure, taking almost all of their courses together. The cohort structure facilitated IET input into course assignments and timelines and the practicum. Those interviewed affirmed the value of the cohort, during the program and after. During the program, they shared experiences and skills and learned from each other. After completing the program, many continue to be in contact with each other and to provide support in finding employment and

managing their first teaching positions. They view this collaboration as valuable (personal communication, March 2012). IETs have identified that they also keep in contact with some of their mentor teachers, guest speakers from the field, and program staff.

For the four- to five-week practicum, IETs were placed with a mentor teacher in a classroom. After these first practicum placements, IETs were proactive and made specific requests about further placements in relation to grade level, subject area, and location/school division. After each practicum was completed, meetings of IETs, mentor teachers, faculty advisors, and the program coordinator took place. In these meetings, IETs interacted with the mentor teachers as fellow professionals and were able to express conflicting view-points on the practicum.

In one school placement, an IET found herself treated as an inferior by her mentor teacher. As delineated in James (1994), the mentor teacher's standardized version of teacher did not encompass the identity of the IET. In personal communication (spring 2009), the mentor teacher confided that the IET, Ms. Euba, was unlike any of the "girls" she had previously accepted as student teachers. Ms. Euba was indeed unlike those young women. Ms. Euba had taught for eight years in her home country and was a mother of four. She was committed, vocal, and Black. Ms. Euba had entered the practicum with a focus on learning Canadian school culture. She approached her mentor teacher as someone who had knowledge of that culture. Ms. Euba wanted to include all students: "I try to create a positive and safe learning environment [for] my students because I know it is really important in regard to learning" (from Ms. Euba's self-assessment of her student teaching). Ms. Euba's own learning environment was neither positive nor safe due to the antipathy of her mentor teacher (whose language had racist undertones, without being overtly racist, and whose assessments of Ms. Euba's teaching were very critical). Despite the criticism, Ms. Euba did not doubt her ability:

I have taught in [my country] for eight years...before coming to Canada. I know how good I was then and I still have that confidence about myself that by the time I complete this program, I will bounce back to myself as a teacher which I love to be. To me, I am very proud of myself that I am really learning as much as I could in spite of all odds and challenges I face daily at school. I assume we are all teachers and we should make the learning environment comfortable for students under our care to feel free to take academic risks... (personal communication, December, 2009)

Ms. Euba sought and found appropriate institutional and personal support around her interactions with her mentor teacher. Given the difficulty of the situation, she was offered a move to a different school placement. Ms. Euba's decision was to complete the practicum in this placement. She understood that a move to another school in mid-term could reflect badly on her in employment interviews. She was able to refuse "help" and affirm her own competency even when it was under direct attack by her co-operating teacher. Ms. Euba's self-awareness and resiliency were confirmed in her next and final practicum placement in which her teaching was affirmed by her mentor teacher and in her work with students.

The agency and professionalism demonstrated by Ms. Euba was also evident in the decision by two IETs to leave the program before completion. In one case, the

decision was provoked by the Federal Agreement on Internal Trade (2009) which made the IET's Ontario certificate valid in Manitoba, altering the context of the program for the IET. In the second case, an IET with a provisional certificate, Carmela Esperanza, successfully applied for a teaching position in a First Nations school. Ms. Esperanza completed her six outstanding education credits the following summer, achieving a permanent teaching certificate and continued to teach at Rainbow Lake First Nations School:

I needed to go when the director called me and said I that I am hired. I don't know if you can still remember [that] you asked me how much they will pay me and I didn't even ask them how much they will pay me. Because being back to the classroom for me, as a teacher, I have my classroom, I have my students. It is really a fulfillment for me, whatever it takes as long as I can go back to the classroom. It is like a healing for me ... (Carmela)

IETs Working in Schools

Finding a teaching position was like "coming home" for Carmela and the other four IETs observed and interviewed near the end of their school year. All identified difficulties experienced in this transition; however, their review of their year was focused on their teaching and competency.

I use a combination of both [Filipino and Canadian teaching approaches] because I have that experience already. And coming into a new country, I have to adapt to what I had before and then try to see what is fitting to my kids. Like now that I am at [this school] I have some kids who are—I think is easier for me to talk to them the way I did back home—and with some kids it is not applicable, you have to use Canadian style. (Mona)

The IETs began their teaching in Manitoba with a strong teaching identity, an understanding of cultural differences and the ability to navigate them. The bridging program curriculum was focused on Manitoba school culture and on curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. IETs affirmed the value of curriculum courses. In school practicum placements, where they taught in a mentor teacher's classroom, IETs were immersed in school culture and had the opportunity to connect formal curricula to the students. IETs were able to distinguish how school culture varied from one school to the next, even within one school division, and were able to adapt to each school.

There was one adaptation in the practicum that was somewhat more difficult for IETs. As student teachers, they had to share the classroom and were secondary in authority to the mentor teacher: "... even during that practicum it was difficult because I had been a teacher. I had had my own classroom and now I would be in somebody else's classroom ... You are in a difficult situation; it is like going and visiting a house and you are just a visitor. It was difficult really for me to say: This is my classroom" (Marianna). Generally, the younger IETs with less teaching experience and a less developed sense of authority were more comfortable in the role of student teacher. However, these younger teachers also emphasized the authority conferred through their teaching experience in their home countries. The above discussion of Ms. Euba's practicum placement reinforces how the experience of authority—of authoring and of being authored as

“teacher” in their home country—migrates with the IETs to the new country and is translated in that context.

IETs and Discrimination in Schools

The bias IETs experienced in schools and in finding employment was mirrored by their children’s experiences in public schools. These experiences of discrimination are discussed with a focus on IETs’ capacity to protect their own children and to respond to further acts of discrimination beyond their families via their agency and advocacy. In a group of 11 IETs, five had school age children and four of the five reported acts of discrimination affecting their children. A fifth IET reported discrimination against a child in a daycare (*Within and Without, Equity for Internationally Educated Teachers*, DVD 2009 and interview transcripts). As educators, IETs were positioned to address their children’s experiences of discrimination with teachers and administrators and they did this. One individual, after consulting with classroom teachers and the school principal, eventually met with the divisional superintendent to pursue a solution for the bullying of her middle years child. This bullying had lasted for more than a school year and had been extended to the family as a whole when their home was egged (personal communication, spring 2010).

These IETs’ experiences of discrimination are not atypical. In the Institute of Research on Public Policy (IRRP) study, *The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program*, 100 principal applicants to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program and 50 of their spouses were interviewed. Carter stated (at IRRP working lunch on October 20, 2010) that 19% of the principal applicants and 26% of the spouses reported that their children had experienced discrimination. This figure is disturbing, especially when it is legitimate to assume that not all children report discrimination to their parents and not all immigrant parents would report it to the interviewer. This problem is not limited to the effect on the immigrant children being bullied and their families; it expands and includes the perpetrators, peers, and onlookers (Pepler & Craig, 2008).

IETs’ effectiveness as agents of change is evident in their response to bullying and discrimination and their commitment to reporting it. They were able to discuss discrimination and bullying in a public forum with fellow educators and to take action to prevent it on behalf of their own children. As educators, they had the ability to access teachers and administrators and navigate their children’s schools. As classroom teachers, these IETs are likely to continue to be proactive and thus prevent discrimination against other people’s children.

IETs can take an important role in immigrant integration through their position as teachers in Manitoba schools. As well as supporting immigrant students and mediating culture, they are role models (Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner, 2011; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). IETs see themselves as having much to contribute to the fabric of school life through their teaching and immigrant experience. Their sense of competency, of teacher agency, is high.

Logically, IETs can function as agents of change within the schools only if they are located within those schools, as teachers and administrators. The transition to employment is complex. In Manitoba, IET potential has been highlighted in the field through outreach and advocacy by the IET programs. Networks of established IETs also advocate for recently arrived IETs. Educational assistant positions (which some IETs take up pre-certification) provide limited teacher agency (Weiss, 1994). Discriminatory hiring

practices, as discussed above, are an obstacle. Some of the IETs who completed the Bridging Program several years ago and continue to work as substitutes experience disappointment and frustration. Those who have term teaching contracts want to preserve those positions and gain permanent contracts. Two of the IETs interviewed for the study subsequently received permanent contracts, after two years of term contracts. For IETs on term contracts or working as substitutes, their precarious employment situation limits their potential as agents of change.

The Manitoba IETs hired in full-time positions had demonstrated their ability to work within the dominant culture in their practicum and had been perceived by the employer as having sufficient cultural capital to be hired. In some cases, the IETs' linguistic and cultural abilities to work with members of their ethnic/immigrant community in the school were a positive factor in their hiring. The four in the urban school division had moved from subbing to short-term contracts to being re-hired for a full year on contract. Hiring term contract positions, as opposed to permanent contracts, is a common practice with Canadian-born recent education graduates. IETs' recertification process, immigrant status, and "lack of Canadian experience" position them as comparable to "new graduates" from the employer perspective.

The employer perspective also positions the IET as "different" or "Other." The biases experienced by IETs in the hiring process are common to many immigrants, but have been identified as more pronounced for IETs because teachers are seen as purveyors of culture and sustainers of common values. IETs "foreignness" can be read as making them unsuitable for this role. Alternatively, IETs can be read as culturally fluent and adept at mediating cultural differences.

Positioning the Teacher

If education in Manitoba is moving beyond a homogeneous sense of community—as reflected in curriculum materials developed for Ukrainian heritage, treaty relations resource kits, and resources relating to Asian heritage (Manitoba Department of Education)—then the teacher's role to preserve homogeneous or dominant culture must shift. In the Manitoba school system, White teachers dominate the teaching force while the student population is multicultural and multi-racial (Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth, 2006). In response to these heterogeneous classrooms, curriculum has been changed (for example, the provincial social studies curriculum in 2003). It is argued that the teacher population should also change to be more representative of the students and to provide culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). "Many schools are implementing a curriculum that includes multi-cultural education, but we know that is not enough. What is needed is a multi-cultural education curriculum coupled with the power of the presence of minority group teachers and the cultural mediation abilities they bring to their work" (Quicho and Rios, 2000, p. 523). "The power of their presence" as described in the Quicho and Rios' paper of the same name is understood as instrumental for multicultural curriculum and a social justice orientation. IETs teaching in Manitoba can be seen as providing cultural mediation, not only to the students who share their ethnicity, but to all immigrant students who share the immigrant experience. For all students, these IETs may represent how "difference" is respected and how those who are different can achieve authority. This representation may have meaning for aboriginal students and aboriginal school communities in Manitoba. IETs in the study are teaching in the city of Winnipeg and in the North.

As immigrants, many IETs had little or no experience of Manitoba aboriginal culture. Initially, IETs in the bridging program approached aboriginal culture as one of many new cultural experiences. However, as they developed an understanding of its significance to education in Manitoba, some IETs focused on learning more about aboriginal culture. One IET independently studied with an elder. Another IET who was doing a practicum in a school with a large aboriginal population gathered materials on aboriginal culture, consulted with the program coordinator, and made parallels to experiences teaching in village schools in the IET's home country.

Teaching employment is more available in Northern communities and on First Nations schools. For some IETs, teaching in the North seemed the most likely route to regain their professional status and become a teacher again. Four IETs from the program found their first teaching positions in the North. There were concerns about relocating their families a second time or leaving their families in Winnipeg in order to work. For some IETs, the secondary relocation actually provided a stronger sense of place. One of the IETs interviewed, Carmela Esperanza, was hired to teach at Rainbow Lake, a First Nations school. This context shaped her experience differently from the four teachers working in urban schools.

At Rainbow Lake School, like the White teachers, Ms. Esperanza was an "outsider" to the Aboriginal community. As a Filipino immigrant, she shared differences with the Aboriginal community. Ms. Esperanza's "brown-ness" and other differences from the mainstream did not include her in the aboriginal community. Her accent, education, and traditions were read as "different" and her difference was both judged and valued. Primarily, her teaching of the community's children was the focus of the judgment and the valuing. Her positive and disciplined relationships with her students, realized through their success in Science Fair, were appreciated. Secondly, her openness to community values and her participation in fishing, socializing, and church gave her access and influence. Finally, her choice to have her young son attend Rainbow Lake School affirmed to the community that it was valued: "She is part of us—of the reserve. Her son fits in" (Norma, colleague). Ms. Esperanza experienced herself as both insider and outsider in the school community. An analysis of Ms. Esperanza's ability to be both insider and outsider can be understood as experiencing identity as both multiple and durable (Luke, 2008). Immigrant teachers encompass both a strong ethnic identity and an ability to see and share multiple perspectives (as evidenced in Mona Blanco's discussion of her teaching above and Randy Sugay's discussion below).

Ms. Esperanza's understanding of schooling and student participation was based on her many years of teaching in the public schools in the Philippines. Initially, she expressed concerns about curriculum and behaviour in her new school and the effect of her agency was to build community, teaching students "to listen and how to work in cooperatively in the classroom" (Carmela). She was able to change some expectations and also able to accept what she could not change. In developing curriculum, she mediated between aboriginal culture and dominant culture. Ms. Esperanza experienced isolation and loneliness but engaged with the community. She was rooted in her identity as a teacher and a Filipino. This rootedness was respected as was her respect and openness to the reserve and school community. After one and a half years, Ms. Esperanza moving to a public school in Frontier School Division, also in an aboriginal community in the North.

Teaching in the North is very different than teaching in urban schools in Winnipeg. The communities are different and the student population in the city is more diverse. Mona Blanco, Neena Kaur, Randy Sugay, and Takdeer Singh were all teaching in the same school division in schools with large immigrant populations and significant numbers of aboriginal students.

The IETs teaching in urban schools are positioned to mediate between dominant school/community culture and immigrant and ethnic cultures within the school. From this position, they are also able to address inequities. IET experiences in multiple cultures and languages, combined with teacher training, makes possible a fluency in interpreting cultural experiences for themselves and others in a school community. When asked how she perceived the needs of immigrant students in her Grade 7 class, IET Neena Kaur replied that language was the first consideration and that being able to speak Punjabi with new students in her class was important. She added that the school office also calls on her to translate for other students and parents. More than language is required: "If they are new to the country, we can have a class discussion. These are common values from all over the world and families. Being a new immigrant, I know how hard it is." Ms. Kaur added that it is important to know the language to get parent involvement. She explained that when she took over from the original classroom teacher in November, they had held parent/student/teacher meetings together. The initial teacher told Ms. Kaur that parents who had never come for such meetings in the past were attending because Ms. Kaur could speak with them in their own language.

Despite her self-described and institutionally approved role that includes being a Punjabi translator and cultural mediator, Ms. Kaur's Grade 7 students do not perceive her in that role. When I asked Ms. Kaur's students, many of whom come from India, what they had learned from her about culture, most of the students replied they had learned about the Korean culture from her. Korea was the nation that the class had been assigned for the school multicultural fair. The students perceived their teacher as immersed in her and their own culture and therefore did not see it as necessary to teach Indian culture. When asked what Ms. Kaur teaches about India, a student replied: "Nothing. She talks about it" (25.5.11). Talking and teaching are understood as two different activities. Talking about India happens naturally, while teaching about culture is a structured activity. To effect change in how these students understand formal and informal curriculum would be a valuable undertaking. Could they learn to integrate what they know with what they believe they should know? In the interim, their culture has been integrated informally in their daily experience.

In the interviews with Ms. Kaur, Ms. Blanco, Ms. Esperanza, Mr. Sugay, and Mr. Singh, it was evident that they identified primarily as teachers, not as cultural mediators. However, being a teacher includes being aware of cultural differences and community needs—the formal and the hidden curriculum. It also includes awareness of identity embedded in culture. These teachers demonstrated such awareness.

IETs Randy Sugay and Takdeer Singh were teaching Grade 9 and 10 science and math on term contracts at Prairie Collegiate, a high school with a multi-ethnic population and many immigrants. Mr. Sugay specialized in science and Mr. Singh in math in their respective home countries. Several of their classes were observed and what was remarkable was the ordinariness of the interactions. Both teachers had established a welcoming and organized learning environment. Student knowledge was invited and acknowledged as part of the teaching and learning process. Some of the students

challenged authority in the usual fashion and both teachers maintained order. Mr. Singh was adept at keeping focus and not getting involved in power struggles. Both he and Mr. Sugay used their particular styles of humour to engage students. Both knew the students well, provided individual support, and were involved in extracurricular activities. In both classes, the students no longer heard “accents”; they simply heard the teacher.

Within the “normalcy” of the day-to-day working of the classrooms there was another level of teaching that bridged cultural differences. When asked how he supported others’ culture, Mr. Sugay answered that he supported Filipino-Canadian students through connecting to their experience. He added that sometimes he speaks Tagalog with them if they are having trouble in Math. Mr. Sugay noted that discipline in the Philippines is different than in Canada; in the Philippines: “No is No.” Like Ms. Blanco, he chose to be more strict with the Filipino students, based on how they are treated at home. His approach bridged differences in discipline from home to school. Mr. Sugay also connected to non-Filipino students through his culture: “I have White kids in my class who ask me for Tagalog words.”

Like Mr. Sugay, Mr. Singh also spoke to students in his and their first language, Punjabi. Mr. Singh was directly involved in teaching culture as he initiated, directed, and choreographed Indian dance groups in the high school. The dance groups performed at the school and for school division events. Lunchtime rehearsals became a cross-cultural experience with varied student groups observing the dance and enjoying the music. Eventually students of other ethnicities joined the dance groups. Mr. Singh’s personal interest and cultural proficiency positioned him as both expert and companion to the dancers. Mr. Singh was also part of a school committee working on gang prevention. This is another level of cultural mediation—using one’s cultural capital to re-form student allegiances.

In his second year at the school, Mr. Singh was instrumental in Prairie Collegiate hosting its first Divali celebration, at which the dance troupes performed. Several hundred community members, the majority Indian, filled the high school gymnasium for the celebration of Divali, a festival of light. The school has been involved in anti-racism projects for many years and has received and supported immigrant students since the 1980’s. Nonetheless, the Divali celebration was remarkable in its recognition of others’ cultural experience and community within an institutional framework that had not previously sanctioned such a celebration. It was not Mr. Singh’s “presence” which was instrumental in the celebration; it was his determination, his talents and the effect of his agency expressed in the context of a particular school community. Other teachers identified Mr. Singh’s role as pivotal and Mr. Singh identified the support from other teachers and administrators in creating the event. The Divali celebration represented a changed level of public recognition for the Asians in the school community.

The IETs teaching in Winnipeg were in a position to mediate between dominant school/community culture and immigrant/ethnic cultures in the school. In varying ways, the IET participants teaching in schools were functioning as cultural mediators. Cultural mediation need not include cultural critique or a critical acknowledgment of differences. An IET may choose to take up that critique within the context of the school community they are situated in and in relation to their experiences as a teacher and as a citizen of another country. A native born teacher can make a similar choice from within their experience of teaching and citizenship. In order to become agents of change in their schools, IETs’ cultural mediation must encompass critique of dominant culture. Could

this first Divali event be read as a critique as well as a celebration? That is, if hundreds of families in the school community have gained access to the school building to publicly live their cultural heritage, is the dominant culture altered?

IETs identified race, ethnicity, and religion as sites of discrimination for themselves, their families, and their friends. Prairie Collegiate, where Divali was held, was the same school where one IET's son had been bullied about his turban a few years earlier, to the point where the young Sikh cut his hair and stopped wearing a turban (Schmidt & Block, 2009). The IETs interviewed described discrimination and racism but did not identify themselves as resisting it, although some participated in an association for teachers of colour. They were proactive in addressing discrimination and racism on behalf of their own children and their students, as described above. Do they see themselves as agents of change? None of the IET participants identified themselves in those terms, although some saw the changes or effect of their presence in the school: "I keep my identity in this school. The teachers know I am Filipino. I did one presentation [in another's class] on a citizen coming from third to first world. I am showing them where I came from to understand... how life is there" (Randy). Navigating a new culture and maintaining your cultural identity is a layered process, not a linear one.

The contradictory positions IETs are situated within make it possible for them to mediate some of the changes in Manitoba schools resulting from increased immigration to the province (Schmidt & Block, 2010). IETs can change how cultural differences are perceived. Rather than mirroring dominant social norms, IETs can be an alternative to stereotypes and extend all students' understanding of difference. These changes depend on many factors. There need to be changes in values and orientation, as well as structural changes in educational institutions, to enable the hiring of IETs. Once hired, IETs benefit from mentoring into the school community. As the IETs negotiates their place within the school community, they will position themselves within that context. This is an active process and has effects on the context. The "power of their presence" is not simply as a representation or role model. IETs are agentic, because of what they can do.

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